

90 Bruynswick Road
New Paltz, NY 12561
June 26, 2007

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JUL 25 2007

Glenda Wiles
Administrative Assistant
Ravalli County Commissioners Office
215 S. 4th Street, Suite A
Hamilton, MT 59840

Ravalli County Commissioners

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RE: Opposition to Ravalli County Mining Proposal to quarry Lost Horse Crag on popular U.S. Forest Service Land

I am writing with regard to the proposal from Ravalli County to mine the Lost Horse Quarry on the Darby Ranger District, Bitterroot National Forest. I urge you to terminate all efforts to process the proposed destruction of the valued recreational resource at Lost Horse.

Lost Horse Quarry is an incredible, one-of-a-kind, world-class climbing area and therefore a destination for a growing population of recreationalists. Montana is known as a climbing destination primarily for it's stellar climbing at Lost Horse. The Forest Service proposal does not recognize or consider the unique recreational asset of Lost Horse, nor the hundreds of climbers land owners and other users in the area. They do not realize climbers and many other users enjoy Lost Horse every month of the year and grossly underestimate the safety and egress issues (access from an upper observation point).

As well, the area is a recreation destination for other user groups from fishermen to campers to mountain bikers and hikers to nature watchers. Peregrine falcons are an outstanding asset of the area and many birdwatchers value Lost Horse for it's excellent birdwatching opportunities.

Re-activation of the quarry will negatively impact the scenic nature of the area, produce noise, disrupt wildlife such as migrating herds, wolverine that migrate through canyon, and peregrine falcons (which nest on the cliff), create a bigger footprint scar in the area (2 to 3 times bigger and deeper) and basically make the area too dangerous or impossible for climbing.

The Lost Horse Quarry proposal would also work AGAINST U.S. Forest Service policy that seeks "action toward enhancing America's public lands and recreation resources."

Destroying the recreational resource at Lost Horse and ignoring the needs of the recreation community in Montana and those that visit from abroad would be directly countered by the proposal.

A new industrial quarry site at Lost Horse will choke off visitation and, in turn, dry up tourist

dollars in the Darby-Hamilton area of the Bitterroot Valley.

Home values near the gravel plant or new trucking route will also be negatively impacted. Every year for ten years, 750 large mining trucks would use the county road currently frequented by tourists, home owners, and recreational users of the Lost Horse Canyon area.

In fact, it seems that the USFS is the only entity supporting this mining proposal that would unnecessarily displace the use of a high-quality USFS recreation area at a time when the USFS is promoting a pro-recreation agenda that seeks "to identify challenges and solutions to meeting the nation's recreation needs through our public lands and waters." Indeed, in the last few months the USFS has even convened regional public meetings "to prompt continued discussion and action toward enhancing America's public lands and recreation resources." The Lost Horse Quarry proposal would work at direct cross-purpose with this Service-wide policy by destroying the recreational resource at Lost Horse and ignoring the needs of the recreation community in Montana and those that visit from abroad.

I urge you to terminate all efforts to approve a quarry at Lost Horse, whether by Ravalli County or anyone else. This mining proposal does not recognize or consider the unique recreational asset of Lost Horse quarry application and the USFS should instead manage the area for its highest value: an unique and irreplaceable recreational resource.

Sincerely,

Amy Pickering

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amy', followed by a large, stylized flourish or initial that extends to the right.